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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Environmental Health Coalition Says City Should Start Here, Start Now in San Diego's Urban Communities

Climate Action Plan heats up on first day of environmental review process as community urges stronger action

SAN DIEGO, March 2, 2015— Today, Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) unveiled its plan to address climate change in San Diego. “Start Here, Start Now – Put Our Neighborhoods First in the Climate Action Plan,” echoed throughout tonight’s City Council scoping meeting as the community urged Mayor Kevin Faulconer to strengthen the plan and ensure that the neighborhoods most impacted by climate change see strong action first. The scoping meeting begins the environmental review process for the plan.

According to EHC, an organization fighting toxic pollution in San Diego/Tijuana, the impacts of a changing climate are most detrimental in neighborhoods that:

- Have the highest rates of asthma hospitalization among children in the city;
- Breathe the highest levels of air pollution from trucks, freeways and industrial sources;
- Live in old, unhealthy homes lacking energy efficiency and solar energy needed to reduce unaffordable energy bills;
- Lack access to safe, affordable and convenient transit, bicycling and walking options to access jobs, health care, parks, and cooling centers; and,
- Face the highest rates of unemployment, underemployment and low-wage jobs.

“Climate change threatens the ability of all San Diegans to live in healthy communities, impacting some more than others,” says Kayla Race, EHC policy advocate. “It’s impossible to implement actions throughout the city all at once, so the place to start is in the neighborhoods that are most adversely impacted. We want the city to facilitate installation of transit, solar and energy efficient buildings in these communities first.”

Councilmember David Alvarez offered his support beginning in the areas most impacted by the effects of climate change as well. “Neighborhoods in my district and others like it have been waiting their turn for investments in solar energy, affordable and convenient public transit, bicycling and pedestrian infrastructure, efficient and healthy homes and improved air quality. We can’t afford to wait any longer,” said Alvarez at a press conference earlier in the day. “We need to act here and now to ensure our neighborhoods are resilient against climate change impacts.”

A plethora of community members and organizations, including San Diego 350, Center for Policy Initiatives, San Diego/Imperial Counties Labor Council, City Heights Community Development Corporation, MAAC, California Nurses Association, Sierra Club San Diego Chapter, Cleveland National Forest Foundation, Asociación de Liderazgo Comunitario, Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry and King Chavez High School repeated similar comments. Attendees at the evening meeting told City staff that urban neighborhoods are desperate for climate change action that must start here and start now.

“I positively support the adoption of a strong Climate Action Plan for the City of San Diego. Climate change impacts disadvantaged communities, including many in District 9, hardest,” said Councilmember Marti Emerald. “We need to make sure that the economic, transportation and public health needs of the citizens in disadvantaged neighborhoods are adequately addressed by the plan.”

According to EHC, the specific actions these communities need to see from the plan include:

- Reducing air pollution
- Improving access to public transit, bicycling and walking options
- Making homes energy efficient and healthy
- Increasing local clean energy
- Creating good quality jobs

“Residents in my neighborhood already suffer from air quality that’s damaging to breathe, energy bills that are difficult to pay and public transit that’s hard to access,” says Irma Ortiz, resident of Logan Heights. “My community has needed the City to act on climate and pollution for a long time, and I hope the mayor’s plan ensures we will see action soon.”

In agreement, Councilmember Myrtle Cole said, "San Diego's working families must be equipped to be resilient in a changing climate and create healthy, sustainable investment and quality jobs in communities that have historically been underserved."

For more information on Environmental Health Coalition and “Start Here, Start Now – Put Our Neighborhoods First in the Climate Action Plan,” please visit www.environmentalhealth.org.

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COALITION: Founded in 1980, Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) builds grassroots campaigns to confront the unjust consequences of toxic pollution, discriminatory land use and unsustainable energy policies. Visit us online at <http://www.environmentalhealth.org>.